



# Department of Justice

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## **JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES CHANGES IN ILLINOIS RULES CONCERNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER STUDENTS**

WASHINGTON – Today, the Justice Department announced that, pursuant to its agreement with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the state has finalized administrative rules that will ensure school districts throughout Illinois provide appropriate language support services to English language learner (ELL) students until they no longer need them.

The United States previously determined that ISBE was violating the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) because its rules and guidance did not ensure that school districts serve ELL students beyond the state's three-year requirement for specific ELL programs. ISBE denied violating the EEOA but agreed to amend its rules and to issue guidance to make clear that ELL services must continue beyond year three until ELLs achieve English proficiency on the state's mandated test. The amended rules, which will take effect once filed with the Illinois Secretary of State, require school districts to submit to ISBE for review and monitoring a plan outlining: the ELL services to be provided beyond year three, the qualifications of the staff providing such services, and the resources and materials needed to support these services.

"All English Language Learner students have the right to appropriate language support services until they achieve English proficiency, and when educational agencies terminate such services prematurely, they deny these students the equal educational opportunity that federal law guarantees them," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "We applaud the Illinois State Board of Education for making this right clear through its amended rule."

The enforcement of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 at both the state and district levels is a top priority of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

Additional information about the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department is available on its website at <http://www.justice.gov/crt>.

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